Sri Vidya Prakasananda Giri Swamy

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Sri Vidya Prakasananda Giri Swamy Sadguru (April 13, 1914 – April 10, 1998), born Ananda Mohan was a Hindu sage and a noted scholar. He was born to Sri Tunuguntla Ramaswami and Smt Suseela Devi in Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. He is the founder of Sri Sukabrahma Ashram, the prime most devotee of Sadguru Sri Malayalaswami, the founder of Sri Vyasashram. He has delivered many talks on Hindu Dharma, and is the author of Gita Makaranda, Yoga Vasishta and many other books on Vedanta; delivered close to 108 Gita Yagnas; an eminent Vedic scholar and an ascetic who had renounced all worldly pleasures. His impressive oratory skills is a god given gift to him, where in his speeches were extremely lucid, extol and reconcile all religions and Yogas.He conducted numerous Gita Yagnas throughout Andhra Pradesh and his magnum opus Gita Makaranda achieved unprecedented circulation and is a widely found book in every household. He has given an unmatched and widest publicity to Srimad Bhagavad-Gita and extensively spread the spiritual education that aroused unprecedented spiritual awakening. His short stories are much talked about among the folklore. The main characteristic of his stories is the lucidity in style that makes the essence of the story understandable, even to a layman.

Sri Vidya Prakasananda Giri Swamy



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Date of birth	13 April 1914
Place of birth	Machilipatnam
Birth name	Ananda Mohan
Date of death	10 April 1998 (aged 83)
Place of death	Sri Sukabrahma Ashram in Sri Kalahasti
Philosophy	Advaita Vedanta
Quotation	"Be Fearless"

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Family background

On Monday, 13 April 1914, in Anuradha Nakshatram, first padam was born a third male child to Sri Tunuguntla Ramaswami and Smt Suseela Devi in Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Nobody would have imagined perhaps, on that day that this child would spread spiritual knowledge and bliss amongst the people of India. Sri Ramaswami as a graduate in Law commenced his practice as an advocate in Tenali town and in a short period acquired extraordinary expertise in his profession and his name and fame spread all over. Ramaswami was the father of eight children and was affluent in his profession. Yet, a loathing for earthly enjoyments became suddenly prominent in his heart. As his attachment to spirituality grew, under these circumstances, ignoring even the upbringing of the family he resigned from the job of an advocate and shifted his family to a modest hut, leaving his luxury two-storied building. In the hut, the life of Sri Ramaswami got fully transformed into a spiritual one, with Dhyana, Japa, Bhajana, Parayana, and Archana along with discussions on spiritual matters. While all the members of the family took part in spiritual and divine services, it was ideal atmosphere, for Ananda Mohan who developed mindset for spiritual matters to proceed on the way to god at a early stage in his life.

Childhood

Ananda Mohan showed intellectual excellence even while he was a child, and so he was initiated to studies at the age of four. Teachers at his school were surprised at the extraordinary receptivity and power of understanding exhibited by the boy. He stood first and won many certificates of merit not only in studies, but also in sports and games which improved his physique.Ananda Mohan thus showed excellent progress in not only academic studies, but also earned expertise in spiritual field, with the encouragement of his father. He memorized verses from well known books like Bhatruhari Subashitam,Bhagavad-Gita and the like, and he had tremendous capacity not only in grasping matters, but also in memorizing. It was evident in later part of his life, when in many meetings he recited verses from the Vedas, and the audience heard with rapt attention and spontaneous admiration.

Entering the College

Ramaswami admitted Ananda Mohan in Noble College, Machilipatnam, in 1928. The boy completed his Intermediate and B.A., with Mathematics as his main subject. Ananda Mohan secured prize in a state wide competition on spiritual scriptures like Bhagavadgita and Sivananada Lahari conducted by Hindu Samaj of Rajahmahendravaram. On advice of his father, Ananda Mohan purchased a set of complete works of Swami Vivekananda with the prize money and studied them with utmost sincerity and got influenced by his writings and assimilate their essence. What indelibly impressed him was the famous call given by Swami Vivekananda to “Be Fearless”. During his college days, he was habituated to take only uncooked food, which was the practice in his house on every Sundays. Once Sri Malayalaswami was camping at Machilipatnam, Ramaswamy accompanied by Ananda Mohan had darshan of the swami at the Annapurna Mutt. On this auspicious occasion Gurudev taught Ananda Mohan, the holy Panchakshari Mantra, consequent to which a relationship of Teacher – student was established between them. Ananda Mohan acquired expert knowledge in both Telugu and English languages in addition to the deep knowledge he had in Sanskrit. Hindi learning then was a National movement and a sign of patriotism; he joined a Hindi school and passed Rashtra Bhasha Visharad examination.His father sent him to Kashi Vidyapeeth to gain higher expertise in language. Ananda Mohan had also acquired abundant skill in swimming too and was the captain of football and Volley ball teams at Kashi Vidyapeeth and won a second prize in the Long jump events of the Annual sports. This sportsmanship enabled him maintain perfect health, which helped him very much in his practice of Yoga Sadhana in later life. Even at Kasi, he regularly practiced Pranayama. Being an avid and habitual writer; he was assistant editor for an English monthly magazine, run at his institution and Editor of Hindi monthly ‘Tapobhoomi’, and earned lot of popularity and respect among other students and teachers.Thus ,for one year Ananda Mohan studied at Kasi and took the coveted degree in hindi.While he was in Kasi,an incident which

was turning point in his future ,took pace at his home in Vijayawada.

Meeting Mahatma Gandhi

When Ananda Mohan was studying at Kasi, a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held, and all prominent Indian leaders were present including great men like Mahatma Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhai Patel came to Vidyapeet. Pupils were appointed as volunteers at the venue of the meeting and the resting rooms where the leaders stayed. Ananda Mohan was drafted for volunteer duties at the cottage where Mahatma Gandhi stayed. It was his good fortune and an opportunity to develop proximity with Bapuji and render services to him. Mahatma's food habits, customs, principles, daily routines were keenly observed by him and left a lasting imprint on Ananda Mohan's mind.

Turning point

Gurudev Malayala Swamy was on tour to different places, and arrived at Vijayawada, on knowing which Ramaswamy felt extremely happy ;prostrated before the Gurudev and prayed him to come to his house for Bhiksha to which he obliged. During his visit to his house,Gurudev commended Ramaswami about his ideal family life, and asked him if he could send any of his five sons to his Ashram, so that he can impart spiritual knowledge to at least one of them, to which Ramaswami immediately said 'Yes'. Gurudev felt extremely happy at this gesture. There was no necessity to think over the matter, as to which son had to be sent to the Gurudev; Ananda Mohan was the most worthy son to be sent owing to his individuality and intellect. The irony was that this decision was made in absence of Ananda Mohan, and later Ramaswamy wrote a detailed letter describing the events that took place in quick succession. On receipt of the letter, ripples surged in his mind and he began to think over his future and could not immediately decide one way or another. Meanwhile, his sister and brother-in-law invited Ananda Mohan to join them for pilgrimage to Hardiwar, Hrishikesh and three of them visited these places and all the ashrams on the Banks of Ganges. While in Hrishikesh, an incident which was surprising turned out to be decisive factor in his life. He was travelling in a boat in the Ganges and saw at a distance a grass pack floating towards him. He picked it up, untied it; and saw to his complete revelation and joy a copy of Sanskrit Bhagavadgita, sanctified with vermillion and flowers. The future life of Ananda Mohan was decided by this book, which he felt had been sent to him by god himself. Now he came to conclusion regarding his duty which was ordained by grace of God and Guru. He preserved the Gita and the three of them journeyed back home to Vijayawada.

As Ananda Mohan made up his mind that he should pursue spiritual path under the guidance of Sri Malayala Swamy,he should dedicate his life to God realization. From that moment,all his family members,relatives,friends treated Ananda Mohan with utmost respect and courtesy. To be a worthy disciple it was necessary to gain knowledge in Vedanta,recognizing this he studied with intense sincerity and devotion many spiritual books for nearly a year.

Entry into Ashram

On the sacred eleventh day Ekadasi of the fortnight coinciding with 17 May 1936, Ananda Mohan reached Sri Vyasashram.

In the presence of the radiant swami in his saffron clothes, Ananda Mohan prostrated and offered fruits and flowers. Compassionate gurudev, saw the jewel of devotee, with an affectionate eye and blessed him. Coming to know that a highly celibate boy had entered Ashram life, duly dedicated by his parents to the Gurudev, all other inmates showed due respect to him. A shed by name Guhashram, situated at a distance to the south of Nishtashram, was allocated with the permission of Gurudev, for the new boy who was to stay there alone. The scenic beauty at the

foot of Nandi Hills, the presence of Sanyasis; Vanaprasthas; Brahmacharis and other students was a feast to the eyes of the new entrant. The Mahavakyas "God is pure knowledge";"I am one with the universal spirit";" That thou art";" Self is nothing but the supreme consciousness of God", were taught to Ananda Mohan by Gurudev, duly explaining their meaning extensively. Hearing the teachings of his Guru, Ananda Mohan commenced assimilating the wealth of knowledge, progressed in his spiritual path, by raising doubts now and then getting them clarified from his Guru. While observing rules of Ashram scrupulously, he practiced his own self imposed rules for self liberation.

Ashram life

In his own words, Ananda Mohan had this to say: "Gurudev's opinion was that every activity should be carried on with discipline; and laziness, Thamoguna were never tolerated. Many good ways, rules and practices were learnt by me during the twelve years of stay with Guruji".

Uncooked food – During the initial days of his entry into Sri Vyasashram, Ananda Mohan made it a principle to take only uncooked food, and this practice was observed rigidly for twelve years of his stay in Ashram. Copra, plantains, soaked Green gram, soaked wheat grains, soaked Bengal gram etc were the only raw items taken by him, without touching the boiled items. To attain purity of mind, purity of food was a prime requirement claim our scriptures.

Ananda Mohan was assigned the duty of translating and explaining Yoga Vasishta in Telugu from Sanskrit original text. He worked hard for nearly 6 years, as it contained 32,000 verses. He also translated Dhammapada, the book of preachings of Buddha into sanskrit along with telugu translation. People who used to visit the Sri Vyasashram daily, used to call Ananda Mohan "Chinna Swami", and Sadguru Malayala Swami as"Pedda Swami". Ananda Mohan collected all the holy preachings of the swami at yagnam termed as Omkara Satra Yagam,during which the Swami explained the Bhagavadgita, Pathanjali yoga sutras, and the glory of Omkara in detail, all of which was published in a book form by name"Omkara Satra Yagam".

An escape from accident: As the Ashram was located at the foot of a hill, and as the hut of Ananda Mohan was surrounded by thick forest, snakes were found in abundance. One night, when he was sleeping under the porch in front of his hut, he dreamt that near his head one snake was crawling and on his sudden waking up, and switching on his torch light, right from the top of the roof, a venomous snake fell at the place where his head was sleeping and crawled away. He was both confused and surprised at the sight. In another incident, a wild bear came by when he was in deep meditation. Its movements disturbed him, and when he opened his eyes, the bear was just in front of him. Excited he got up, stepped backwards and prayed"oh! God, in this form are you appearing before me?", and chanted "Om" loudly. The bear stared at him for a moment, and retreated silently.

Mouna Vratam: Six years since the time Ananda Swami entered the Ashram, due to the spiritual practices all these years, his outlook towards material world thinned out. During this period, he once approached Gurudev sometime in the month of December 1941 and narrated his stare of mind and requested his permission to be in a state of silence for sometime. Starting from Jan 1st, 1942 he commenced his mouna Vratam and went into severe meditation. The Taciturn observance went on undisturbed for one year, during which time his spiritual exercises reached a crescendo.

Assuming Sanyas

Eleven years had passed by, since Ananda Swami joined Vyasashram.To reach the goal of ultimate aspiration he felt that his entry into Sanyas stage (Hermitage) was an absolute necessity, and for total renunciation of worldly affairs. All the stipulations of the swamiji to grant Sanyas had already been satisfied by Ananda swami. On 29th

June 1947, it was decided to perform consecration rites of Sanyasa on Ananda swami as per 5 day tradition at the Ashram. All arrangements were made to grant the deeksha as per Vedic rights, Knowing this many well know people, sadhus from many parts arrived at the Ashram. As per Giri tradition(Dashanami Sampradaya and Kriya Yoga), Gurudev gave Ananda swami his new name Vidyaprakasanandagiri, and thus conferred on him all the rights to teach and preach advaitha philosophy, and on the name,Gurudev suggested that since you are to propagate earnestly Vedic Knowledge, to remind you constantly of my intentions, I propose you this new name. Thus Ananda Mohan had transformed himself to Sri Vidya Prakasananda Giri Swamy, his fame has spread many areas and was respected as he was a expert in practicing what he preaches.

Establishment of Sukabrahma Ashram

Having attained a pre-eminent place in preaching, and having attained the highest stage in Brahmanishta, swamiji desired to establish a separate Ashram which would be a centre of his preachings. He chose Sri Kalahasti as the most suitable place to establish his Ashram. By acquiring a mango grove on the bank of Swarnamukhi river, he decided to construct an Ashram in it. The inaugural ceremony was celebrated on 20th Jan 1950 and was presided by his guru Sri Malayala swami.The Ashram was named Sri Sukabrahmashram, named after holy sage Sri Sukabrahma.The ashram since then has registered a regular growth and attracted devotees from all parts of the country in large numbers.Ananda hospital was also built by swami for the poor and under privileged. The Ashram published several important books such as VashishtaGeeta in Telugu, and lecturers on Gita by swami on various occasions in a book called Geethopanyasamulu.There is also a monthly journal called as Vedanthabheri,to propagate the philosophy of Vedanta, and is in circulation till date. Gita Makaranda is the Magnum opus written by swami and is considered till date his best works. The Gita Yagnas by Swamiji were received by thousands of people wherever it was organized, and since swamiji was a gifted orator people turned up in large numbers on each occasion. Some of the Yagnas at later point were organized by TTD Tirumala Tirupati Devastanam.His 100th and 108th Gita Yagna were held at Hyderabad and was organized on a massive scale, and to facilitate large number of people access to the speeches of Swamiji, TTD arranged recording the discourses, and released them as Audio, Video cassettes, and recently in Video compact discs. Bhakta Kannapa eye hospital was inaugurated in May 1993 in the Ashram, to help the poor and needy, till this date lakhs of people got their eyes examined free of cost, and several eye camps are held on a regular basis.

Death

Since 1994, swamiji was keeping indifferent health, due to his restless movements and strenuous speeches at spiritual meetings. He took seriously ill in April 1995, when he was delivering a discourse at Nizam college grounds, Hyderabad and in March 1998, he was admitted in Apollo hospital, Madras for a special treatment as he was diagnosed with a kidney trouble. Swamiji however was disinclined to go to the hospitals for treatment. He sensed that his physical capacities were fast declining and persisted to be shifted to the Ashram immediately on 9th April 1998.As per his wish, starting at Madras at midnight, he was brought to the Ashram at 5.30 am on 10th April 1998.He died at 7.30 am, two hours after reaching the Ashram. It was his desire to breathe his last in the Ashram. The news spread and people from all parts of the country poured into have a last glimpse of their departed Maharishi and paid their respects. His body was ceremonially placed into the Samadhi close to Dhyana mandir in the Ashram.